

# Hope for the Oppressed & the Proud

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Date: 12 July 2026

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[0:00] Today we have the privilege of being able to go through an entire book of the Bible. If you ever got tired of sitting in church and go, we're just looking at one verse today.! I want to get into this.

Well, we get our entire book this morning. And it is not just a lesson of history or a lesson of just trying to understand what it means.

Today is a moment for meaning. Discovering the meaning of Obadiah for those who first heard it, but also for us and what God has to say. Because Obadiah is relevant for us in Chatswood in 2026. Let me pray. Lord God, would you speak to us these words of judgment and comfort, just like you did at first through Obadiah. And by your Holy Spirit, would you cut us to the heart so that we may follow you as your people, saved by grace.

Amen. Amen. Donald Glover is a musician. And he, one day, was in a music studio. And he'd been there for weeks.

[1:06] And he had nothing to show for it. He was stuck. He had writer's block. And in a moment of clarity and rejection of his anxieties and his pride, he wrote on the walls of probably not his music studio.

So I wonder if it had to get taken down later. He literally scrawled on the wall of that studio, make the best sandcastle. Make the best sandcastle.

If he could agree that his work was just a sandcastle, here for the moment and then swept away by the tide of time, then he could let go of his fears over his legacy, over his fame, and just make art that he liked.

Seeing that his castle was temporary, his castle, it set him free. Ever heard a wise saying that helps you live your life?

You might hear it in advertising. You might hear it in a movie. You might hear it in a random place. But when I heard make the best sandcastle, I've got to tell you, that really helped me. Not only in my creative past life writing music, but for every single day, because I forget how fragile my existence is, how fragile my nature is.

[2:37] I spent years trying to build a castle for myself, a castle of reputation or a castle for my family or a castle of a place in this world.

And when I live this way, I'm the worst version of myself towards me and the worst version of myself towards those around me. We all, in some ways, tend to build castles out of our own lives.

They're built from the blueprints of our desires and our understanding. They're not visible. They're invisible castles.

They're made of accounts. They're made of a title, a house, a spouse, a number and photos of children, a reputation.

The pride that we have in our castle shapes the priorities of our daily life, our character, how we treat people.

[3:41] We become little kings over our own lives, ready to attack anyone coming for our own castle. And in Obadiah, we see that the strongest castles built by man are just sandcastles.

before the tide of the sovereign Lord. No little kingdom is outside of his rule, reach and wrath. Obadiah is, in fact, a message of comfort, comfort to those oppressed by those who are stronger. And it is one of judgment against the proud. Now, you might be thinking, all right, tell me about Obadiah.

We know almost nothing about him. Not only do we know that his name is Obadiah, but we also know that the name Obadiah just means servant. It's almost a name, like if, for instance, I'll take my friend Merle here.

If Merle was a servant of the time, I'd take her name Merle away and I'd call her an Obadiah or Obadiah. So he's completely irrelevant to this message.

[4:59] Almost as if the prophet's job is to just be unseen, translucent, compared to how important this message is against Edom.

Edom was a nation that was descended from the elder brother of Jacob, Esau. Now, Esau was the firstborn to Isaac, the son of Abraham.

Esau despised being the firstborn, despised having the birthright, which also meant he was the one through whom God's plan would come about.

And what he did one day when he was so hungry is he traded God's covenant promises and his birthright to his younger brother, Jacob, who had been cooking up a stew.

As Jacob's family grew, they became the nation of Israel. As Esau's family grew, they became the nation of Edom, Israel's fierce enemies who lived high in the mountains south of Judah.

[6:14] All the way through Obadiah, God swaps the names. And it might have been dislocating as you were listening to Sarah Regis then.

God swaps the names out of brother and nation to remind us of this old, broken family bond. It's really likely that Obadiah prophesied right after when Judah was forcibly exiled, defeated, and removed from their kingdom by Babylon in 597 BC.

So, we've got 1200 years before then of brotherly hatred. And with all of that history hanging over that moment of destruction, Edom helped Babylon exile Judah from their land.

And it's that moment of betrayal that inspires the sovereign Lord to declare the message of Obadiah that Edom is going to be annihilated.

The message of Obadiah wasn't heard though by Edom. It was for the last Israelites left. It was for Judah.

[7:38] Obadiah was assurance and hope to them that the sovereign Lord judges with power bringing justice and gracious salvation.

They're the three movements of Obadiah and my three points this morning. Today, Obadiah calls us to rest with Judah in the hope that God will bring ultimate justice to the oppressed and bring salvation even for the sinful.

And while the message of annihilation seems awful to our modern ears, there is no denying the need for justice in our world.

But can we hope that God is able to judge and that he can do it fairly? Well, let's see if he's able to judge powerfully.

Point one. We might expect God's judgment to unfold as if he is a judge over a modern courtroom. I don't know if you've ever seen a TV show of a courtroom scene or been to court, been in one of the positions in a courtroom, but usually the courtroom begins with reading out of the charges and then some evidence, maybe even some discussion or challenging of evidence, and then comes the judgment.

[9:06] However, everything is backwards here in Obadiah. Obadiah begins with God's already decided verdict over Edom. Let's have a look.

Have a look at verse 2 of Obadiah. The sovereign Lord, who was the one speaking, when the quotes start in verse 1, go all the way to the end. The sovereign Lord reveals his plans.

He's first going to make Edom small and utterly despised. Edom's highly valued reputation among all the other nations is the first thing to go.

The second thing Edom valued was their rocky stronghold home on the heights, boasting, who can bring me down to the ground in verse 4?

God asks his hearers to imagine that the highest living animal they know. The cliff nesting eagle. Edom imagined themselves high up on that ledge, beyond the reach of God.

[10:18] But Obadiah says in verse 4 that not even the stars are beyond the reach for God to bring them down. Everyone here this morning should consider how you are clinging to your reputation and your security as your hope for the future.

But has the pride of your heart deceived you? As it says in verse 3, is your mighty tower made of sand before the sovereign Lord?

God compares himself to great pickers and thieves.

They are those who take and steal, but they leave behind what they don't need or they don't want.

However, God is coming for Edom's cities, verse 3 and 4, their wisest in verse 8, and their mightiest

in verse 9, leaving Edom walls, wisdom, and warriorless.

He's taking everything. God will leave nothing behind in Edom after he is finished. And perhaps what God says most forcefully, we actually miss out in the NIV translation.

[11:47] The original Hebrew language is even stronger in verse 7 than it appears. So, have a look on the screen or in your Bible if you have an NIV English translation.

And I'm going to read the ESV, which has a slightly more accurate translation of the tense. So, have a look at verse 7 and see what is different.

all your allies have driven you to your border. Those at peace with you have deceived you. They have prevailed against you.

Those who eat your bread have set a trap beneath you. You have no understanding. In the original language, what God is saying is, this prophecy is as good as already happened.

as soon as it leaves the Lord's lips. We're meant to experience the force and the power of God here.

[12:52] Especially as we don't even know yet what Edom's done wrong. We don't know their crimes. Everything's out of order for us. Humans can sometimes be really poor judges.

We might try our best. We get all the information. We try and make a good decision. Or maybe you've been in a jury and had to balance the evidence and the crime and how you process it and then agree together to try and figure it out.

We might make our best effort at it. But often we dismiss what should be punished. Especially when it has something to do with what we've done. We want to get that punishment as far away from us as possible.

Or away from those we care about. But what about when we enjoy seeing wrath poured out on those we dislike? Even if there's no evidence.

Who would you like to see God bring down? I remember a scene in an old TV show that my wife Sam and I watched many years ago called Boston legal.

[14:07] And an attorney gave this case clinching defense by challenging the jury on their schadenfreude.

You might not be a German speaker in the room and many weren't in the jury I'm sure. So the character defined it for them. He challenged them on how they were taking spiteful malicious delight in the misfortune of others.

I'm told and I'm going to ruin the pronunciation of this but I'm told in Mandarin carries a similar meaning.

Now I've seen people laugh. That means I've got it terribly wrong but at least it's on the screen. We don't have a word for that in English. He argued this lawyer argued that the jury's attitude towards his unlikable guilty looking client was not enough evidence for them to convict.

The only evidence they had was their schadenfreude. And so with Obadiah ordered in this way for us the right to sit as jury and judge over Edom is taken away.

[15:31] As if God knows about our schadenfreude already our pride or our limits and our right or even our power to judge.

Instead the Lord God alone is the judge. And so when he pronounces a sentence our modern reaction might be let me see why let me see if that's fair.

Instead we're actually invited to sit amongst the crowd and trust the judge. But the original hearers of Obadiah they didn't need the evidence.

They'd experienced the evidence of Edom's crimes as their victims. It is a comfort to Judah that God is a prosecutor and judge over Edom for what was done to them.

He alone can bring justice. He makes sure that the voiceless have their day in court. Point two the Lord brings justice.

[16:49] So verses 10 to 14 we get to see that the Lord's justice is in fact fair. The summary of God's evidence against Edom is there in verse 10.

Because of the violence between brothers a lack of brotherly love care or defense of the other standing aloof which means being intentionally uninvolved while Babylon plundered Israel.

This is not violence like we might expect like Babylon did to Judah but Esau is still charged like an oppressor a co-conspirator like one of them.

In verses 12 to 14 I encourage you to have that open in front of you because it's the least compelling bit of writing in English in the whole of Obadiah and it's because it looks like it just

repeats itself over and over again the structure of the sentences is the same and the reason why is it's in the original language like a poem we can't really grasp that unless you're ancient Hebrew speaking or understand that here today so I want to imagine I want you to imagine that these the list there of what this evidence is are like files of charges being stacked up on a desk by a prosecutor as if he's making these opening remarks it is as if Eden cheered from the grandstands they gloated and rejoiced and boasted in

Judah's day of trouble from high in their towers they taunted traumatized Jerusalem then Eden came down and joined in the celebrations they marched through the gates of Judah's city they took their treasures they even rounded up those who fled to bring them back to their captors around the globe in reported or often unseen places perhaps in your experience or in the experience of your family there is war and conflict and persecution and oppression it's often baseless it's always senseless allies stand idle and defenders sit still silent some cheer on the others destructive conquest and behind the podiums of power leaders lie and at their word and whim people die lives are irreparably broken and justice is often and usually far from the powerless and vulnerable in our world but

[20:01] Obadiah should shock us and challenge us who believe in this God that it is not so with him there is a powerful judge who will bring justice to the oppressed!

He sees and will punish even those who are accessories to murderous oppression God brings justice that is final and right against anyone who thinks they can get away with it and the good news is we get to look back on history and see if God did what he said he would to give us hope that he can judge and that he can judge fairly because a few centuries later even 600 years later during the time of Jesus Edom was no longer a nation surrounding nations ruled over their lands their cities had been renamed and those from the region weren't from the land of Edom anymore they were from the land of Idumea or Idumean for those beaten down and oppressed in our day Obadiah is a comfort that God can and will bring fair justice against oppressing nations and peoples across centuries or at least once for all in a future day to come it's an astonishing message for Judah as it is for us that the God who brings just judges with power and brings justice will also bring a gracious salvation he won't just beat down on their enemies he's actually going to restore those who have been oppressed!

God will restore the fortunes of his exiled beaten beloved people but not even Judah know how wide and graciously the sovereign lord graciously saves third point the lord finishes Obadiah by contrasting his plans for Judah with his plans for all the nations around them God started with the prosecuting and sentencing of Edom but this judge has other nations on his docket as well in verse 15 the lord sets a judgment day to come when all the nations will have their deeds return on their own head we see that Edom and their allies celebrated after the destruction and exile of Judah by drinking perhaps in a ceremonial or worshipping of an alternate god right there on the lord's holy hill in

Jerusalem these nations will be forced verse 16 says to come together again and drink again but this time from a cup of wrath from verse 19 we see that the nations some of the nations who will join Edom Samaria Canaan Philistia Gilead their lands will one day not just be taken away but be given to Judah Judah's borders will be stretched and take note this is before Judah have done a single thing to earn it they haven't done anything to deserve this blessing but God's plan to restore Judah is a plan of unearned grace the pride of our hearts often appears most forcefully in us in our self saving in times of suffering or loss or failure you reach out for help in

[24:24] Chatswood in 2026 or do you try and solve your problem even before those problems happen do you look into the future and build security build wealth for yourself and make sure none of what could go wrong will ever go wrong and when it does we become overactive and our anxieties are screaming in our head save yourself and even if we have help so often we choose to go it alone but unlike us in our comparatively safe and affluent city Judah had just had everything torn away their only option was God's grace they haven't even called out to him yet and yet he is defending them and seeking to bless them their exile itself was a consequence of their own sin they had rejected God they had rejected his rule over them and yet he still seeks to save them

Judah desperately needed the promises that Esau had traded away for a bowl of stew they needed those promises that God had made with Jacob that from a far off land God would make them his nation once again verse 17 but on Mount Zion there will be deliverance it will be holy and Jacob will possess his inheritance and then in verse 21 it even says even the mountains of Esau will be given

to Judah the oppressed are to be restored as a kingdom who will belong to the sovereign Lord I imagine the exiles who heard Obadiah who had nothing except trauma grief and shame I imagine them being so comforted that one day maybe in the next generation or the one after or the one after that they would return to their land and they did they did return but the geopolitical outcomes of this prophecy never came about

Edom did fall and never recovered that happened that the kingdom that Obadiah promised Judah here is still a future hope even today if you look up the maps Judah is not in the same place exactly anymore and they certainly do not have the land around them and then think of those in Judah more generations later in Jesus day in Jesus day Judah was under Roman rule they didn't run their own country and the Romans had given them a ruler to a bit like a puppet king to kind of oversee under their authority and they laughingly even mockingly called this guy the king of the Jews as if he had any power at all his name was Herod in Matthew 2 we hear about this historically accurate person and his reputation in the Bible is the guy who killed all the infant boys in his kingdom in Bethlehem he's the reason Jesus family fled to Egypt as he sought to get rid of the king he was told the promised king who had come as a child this piece of history if you read it in Matthew 2 it helps us wonder alongside Judah who'd been waiting and wondering what God was doing for centuries will the sovereign Lord's promised kingdom ever come that is where Obadiah leaves us with yet unanswered promises we've seen the proud brought low and the oppressed defended and a restored kingdom of

Judah kind of fulfilled but only in part and so what should we then take away as we look back all the way back to Obadiah well firstly I want to encourage you that you cannot build a good enough sand castle to defeat to please or to be anything but enemies of God we need a plan to remove what is between us and God all of our rebellion needs to be white clean somehow or like Eden the Lord will judge us with power too we cannot self save ourselves out of the wrath of God we must yield to the way God graciously saves and brings us into his promised kingdom for

[30 : 15] God has promised in Obadiah to make a way for the Jews to be saved but as I look out here and I don't know all of you but I don't think anyone here is Jewish no one's putting their hand up to say yeah I am well in Chatswood in 20 26 in this gathering no one is Jewish and that means that we're not standing in the shoes of the Jews in Obadiah we're standing in the shoes of the nations we don't have a right to any of those words we are those who build castles we're a part of the pain of those around us in our homes and in our work places God's plan for us for the nations must extend beyond the borders of Judah otherwise Obadiah is only about our drinking of God's wrath and there is no sense of hope there at all!

not only do we need God to get rid of the barrier that we have built between him and us in our sin we need to be brought into that promise we the nations need someone to take our sin and drink our cup of punishment for us so here is where I want you to see that the sovereign lord's plan for a kingdom did break into history and turn everything upside down in Matthew which began with the threat of an Idumean we meet or we see a Judean called Jesus and he had been building the castle of God's promised kingdom out of his own life out of his righteousness holiness rejecting sin refusing pride he had every right to boast to judge even destroy but he stayed silent and meek in verse 36 we see this man sweating blood in the dark desperately calling out to

God saying my father if it is possible may this cup be taken from me yet not as I will but as you will Jesus in that moment chose to trade his table place at the table of peace with God for our place at Obadiah's table of judgment of the nations taking for himself the cup of the sinner the cup of the proud the cup of the oppressor the cup of the exile before anyone asked for or earned a trade as tribute even as Judah themselves Judeans were planning to murder him Jesus decided to drink down our cup and face the wrath of the sovereign Lord for us and he drank that cup down the next day on the cross and you know what is just mind blowing about that moment is that above Jesus head nailed to his cross was a sign in all the known languages of the time for everyone to read this is Jesus the king of the Jews a title written in sarcasm in hatred yet gloriously true is that Jesus was the king it is the king of the Jews Jesus established a kingdom in his death a castle that with defenses that no tide or power can sweep away for all the nations to run to for all people to run to and be saved the offer of peace with the sovereign lord and citizenship in his eternal kingdom is open to all to Jews and to non Jews to the

Jews who killed their king to all who live their lives in pride and sin to those who oppress harm and hate and to those who are oppressed there is a hope for all in the power and justice of God in Jesus

if you don't know this hope follow Jesus come and speak to me after we sing and find hope in Jesus and stop playing in the sand don't leave here today without taking your next step toward Jesus if you do follow him I want to encourage you to take a step in how you are understanding the rule of Jesus over your life and his grace to you as you explore the Bible what is your next step in seeing the love of Christ to you and exploring scripture and I want you to take your next step by experiencing a

[ 36 : 02 ] Sabbath every week is there a big chunk of time or a day that you can set aside every week to unlearn the patterns of your self dependence and proneness to self saving build your reliance on God's grace to you keep choosing to get down from your pride and rest in Jesus Obadiah's promised kingdom is ruled by Jesus who graciously saves!

Amen to Jesus love